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ABSTRACT

Educational consultants charged by a school district with instituting and overseeing an ongoing experimental program in writing across the curriculum can expect that veteran faculty members will be unwilling to change their teaching styles. A "soft sell" is necessary with reluctant faculty. Senior faculty members who are properly motivated are able to articulate more complex problems and assignments, employing more interactive and postactive teaching methods. With the site principal's support, consultants should familiarize themselves with the faculty members and determine the informal leaders, as their support is critically important. Consultants should give the greatest possible consideration to faculty insights, ideas, and opinions but should try to maintain the focus of the program. Throughout the process the consultant should seek out interested parties and endeavor to form an interested nucleus of supportive individuals. Consultants should use one of several models to assess at any point the extent to which the faculty has internalized the content of the program. Consultants could also develop a content specific evaluation process. While it is desirable that related programs be implemented correctly from the standpoint of content, it is also necessary for this to be done with as much sensitivity as possible for the needs of all parties concerned. (Contains 53 references.) (RS)

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How to Develop a Program for Writing across the Curriculum with an Established Faculty in a Period of Retrenchment

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If an educational consultant were assigned to a high school and charged by the school district with instituting and overseeing an ongoing experimental program in writing across the curriculum, that consultant would certainly hope to find a willing faculty that would be reasonably responsive to his or her suggestions. But the consultant would also know that such a reception would be unlikely. Certain tenured faculty members will probably be unwilling to change the way they do things under the best of circumstances (Van Dalen and Meyer, 1966; Gagne, 1977; Jones and Hayes, 1980; Ward, 1991). And in a period of financial cutbacks, when more is expected of a reduced faculty who have less and less to work with, such reluctance will probably be even more pronounced (Kursh, 1971).

The Rand Studies (Berman and McLaughlin, 1975; 1978; 1980) have shown that "soft sell" is necessary with a reluctant faculty. Direct confrontation will only result in further entrenchment of defensive attitudes and a stonewalling resistance to attempts to produce change. This approach is consistent with the work of Piaget (Pulaski, 1971). In this vein, Berman and McLaughlin (1976) have indicated that teachers with five years or more experience rarely change their teaching styles. If they are to be motivated to do so, they need to share in the decision-making process and participate in determining course content and curricular development. This, too, must be handled with subtlety.

More recently Swanson, O'Connor and Cooney (1990) and Moore (1990, 1993) have found that the experiences of veteran faculty members can empower them since they often have more depth of knowledge than do their more junior colleagues. Thus senior faculty members who are properly motivated are able to articulate more complex problems and assignments, employing more interactive and postactive teaching methods, while integrating issues from a variety of domains. Getzels (1982) and Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1986) have also found that junior faculty members generally lack the range and vision of their more experienced counterparts who, in turn, should be able to provide direction, encouragement, and nurturing whenever it may be appropriate to do so.

Of course it is important to have a clear vision of what should be done and of how to go about doing it. Glatthorn (1981) has developed an insightful model for coordinating a schoolwide writing improvement effort integrating eight important areas of academic concern including chapters on evaluating a school's writing program, planning and implementing a staff development

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program, working with parents to improve student writing, and improving the administrator's own writing. His approach provides many excellent insights and recommendations. And, as he makes clear, psychological and political interactions must be given the fullest possible consideration.

In their earlier cited works, Berman and McLaughlin (1979), as well as Loucks (1983) and Hunter (1984), have indicated that the attitude and supportiveness of the site principal is crucial. Consequently, the consultant would be well advised to begin by discussing both relevant ideas and the context of the culture of the particular high school community with this person. In approaching such an administrator, the consultant should try to be as candid as possible given that individual's manifest values. The consultant would usually expect that such a person would be favorably disposed to the idea of related improvements, especially within a climate associated with declining test scores (Hord, Thurber, and Hall, 1981). The consultant should try to win the site principal's support by communicating the genuineness of his desire to help everyone concerned together with the qualifications he has that serve to authenticate his ability to make positive contributions. He should suggest how the principal could facilitate his efforts, as one would hope that key administrative personnel would be disposed to do (Glatthorn, 1981; Cook, 1985; McLeod and Soven, 1991).

With the site principal's support, the consultant should attempt to familiarize himself with the faculty members and to determine the informal leaders, as their support is critically important (Mann, 1978). Some faculty concerns can be anticipated, such as doubts about time that may be lost from other curricular pursuits, fear that students may be overwhelmed by proposed new writing requirements, and personal apprehensiveness about teachers' own abilities when it comes to handling such student writing activities. The consultant should be prepared to confront such matters directly and as reassuringly as is possible within the bounds of honesty (Cappuccilli, 1982; Davis, 1984; Slater, 1988; Couch, 1989). The consultant should also try to spend informal time with the faculty in order to build a sense of trust and to establish a context of shared effort which can be used to effect mutually agreed upon positive change (Pine, 1980; Robertson, 1981). Failure to do so can result in resentments and conflicts as well as opposition to the whole idea of writing across the curriculum. Such attitudes may come with surprisingly entrenched rigidity as well as with resolute determination to avoid such programs in the future (Claypool, 1980; Cornell and Klooster, 1990).

The consultant should give the greatest possible consideration to faculty insights, ideas, and opinions but should try to maintain the focus of the program on its ultimate purpose at all times (Guskey, 1986; White, 1991). In doing so, he should attempt to keep his recommendations as close as possible to the operational modes that were already being used by those teachers with a view toward helping them to do better that which they were already doing (Joyce and Weil, 1980).

With this kind of approach the consultant should attempt to offset defensive attitudes by alleviating feelings of insecurity and inadequacy (Blau, 1988). Teachers need classroom strategies that work easily (Joyce and Showers, 1980; 1982; 1983; Miller, 1983). In this context the consultant might ask the faculty to complete a survey indicating the kinds of writing they actually assign in their classrooms (Joyce, McNair, Diaz and McKibben, 1976; Boice, 1990). He could ask teachers to indicate the kinds of writing products they like to assign to their students--i.e. library reports, essay exams, research papers, poems, stories, essays, etc. (Rubin and Kirby, 1982). He could then demonstrate that writing techniques such as graphic organizers, clustering, and learning logs, can be used to make their jobs easier while helping students to learn content more effectively (Donlan, 1982). Parents also need to be involved as constructively as possible in encouraging student writing and endeavoring to create home atmospheres which can enable students to work both competently and creatively (Glatthorn, 1981).

Throughout the process the consultant should seek out interested parties and endeavor to form an interested nucleus of supportive individuals, endeavoring at all times to communicate his desire to help them while cultivating their desire to work with him (Boiarsky, 1985). Three or four months down the line he should have faculty meetings, using teachers from the school site and coordinating presentations by as many members of the faculty as possible (Binko and Neubert, 1984). At that time the consultant should have a great many reinforcing supplementary materials for distribution (Barnes, 1981). The consultant may employ a concerns-based questionnaire (Hall and Loucks, 1978), endeavoring to find the next group of teachers he would be working with. He should use as team members those people who have already established themselves as such and he should use staff development sessions for those teachers who want them (Sparks, et al, 1985). Throughout the entire process the consultant could use the models developed by Loucks and Melle (1982) and Hall and Loucks (1977; 1978), and especially Hall and Loucks concerns-based model (1978), to be able to assess at any point the extent to which the faculty has internalized the content.

Another possibility for assessment would involve developing a procedure to evaluate the program's efficiency. In developing such a procedure the consultant could draw heavily from the research of Cooper and Odell (1977), who have considered holistic, primary trait, analytic scales, and peer grading with thoroughness and conciseness. The consultant could employ their research in developing a content specific evaluation process. Ultimately, a factor rating system would probably be used with factor weighting employed to emphasize the relative importance of those aspects of the program that were deemed to be most important.

The issue of writing across the curriculum is vital to the development of an articulate, well rounded, competent citizenry. While it is desirable that related programs be implemented and carried out correctly from a standpoint of content, it is also necessary for this to be done with as much sensitivity as possible for the needs of all parties concerned. Otherwise, an extraordinary national opportunity may be needlessly compromised. However, if these matters can be handled both wisely and well, then the potential is quite promising not only for the long-term growth of our students but for the enduring benefit of our educational systems as well.

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